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Ayutthaya Rising: From Land or Sea?

Chris Baker

Ayutthaya rose as a maritime power with involvement down the peninsula and in the China trade. Early Ayutthaya resembled coastal polities of the archipelago more than hinterland states of the mainland. Over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Ayutthaya changed by absorbing people, political structures, and cultural practice from the north.

In recent years, scholars of Southeast Asian history have highlighted the difference between hinterland and coastal states. In the early historiography, Ayutthaya rose as a hinterland state, heir to the traditions of Sukhothai and Angkor. More recently it has become viewed as a hybrid of the two types, but still one which emerged initially in the hinterland mode and only later became a commercial power. This essay assembles the evidence for viewing early Ayutthaya as a maritime state, and examines the implications for the nature of early Ayutthaya and the interpretation of its history.

The historiography of Ayutthaya

The division between hinterland and coastal states in Southeast Asia in the early pre-modern era (roughly twelfth to fifteenth centuries) has long been recognised. The hinterland rulers extracted resources from the land and the forests by the command of manpower. They built walled cities to provide protection, accumulated sacred goods to attract pilgrims and devotees, and raided outlying areas and competing centres to carry away people. They elaborated law codes, recruitment systems and complex social hierarchies to manage manpower, and they have left behind both monuments and records. By contrast, the rulers of the coastal centres were oriented toward trade, looking outwards to the oceans and often to China as the centre of commercial demand and political legitimation. Some copied aspects of China's tribute system in their own relations with subordinate centres. Their capitals were cosmopolitan settlements. They paid little attention to land administration or religious splendour and left little to posterity in the form of either written documents or durable architecture.

In the conventional story of Thai history, Ayutthaya is the successor to Sukhothai. In David Wyatt's classic account, Ayutthaya also inherited much from Angkor and 'less than sixty years after [its] foundation … was on the verge of becoming a major power in the interstate relations of mainland Southeast Asia'.[1] In these versions, Ayutthaya from the start is a hinterland state with territorial ambitions.

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1 David K. Wyatt, *A short history of Thailand* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 68; Wyatt describes Ayutthaya under Ramathibodi I (r. 1351-69) as 'an uneasy alliance between Tai manpower from

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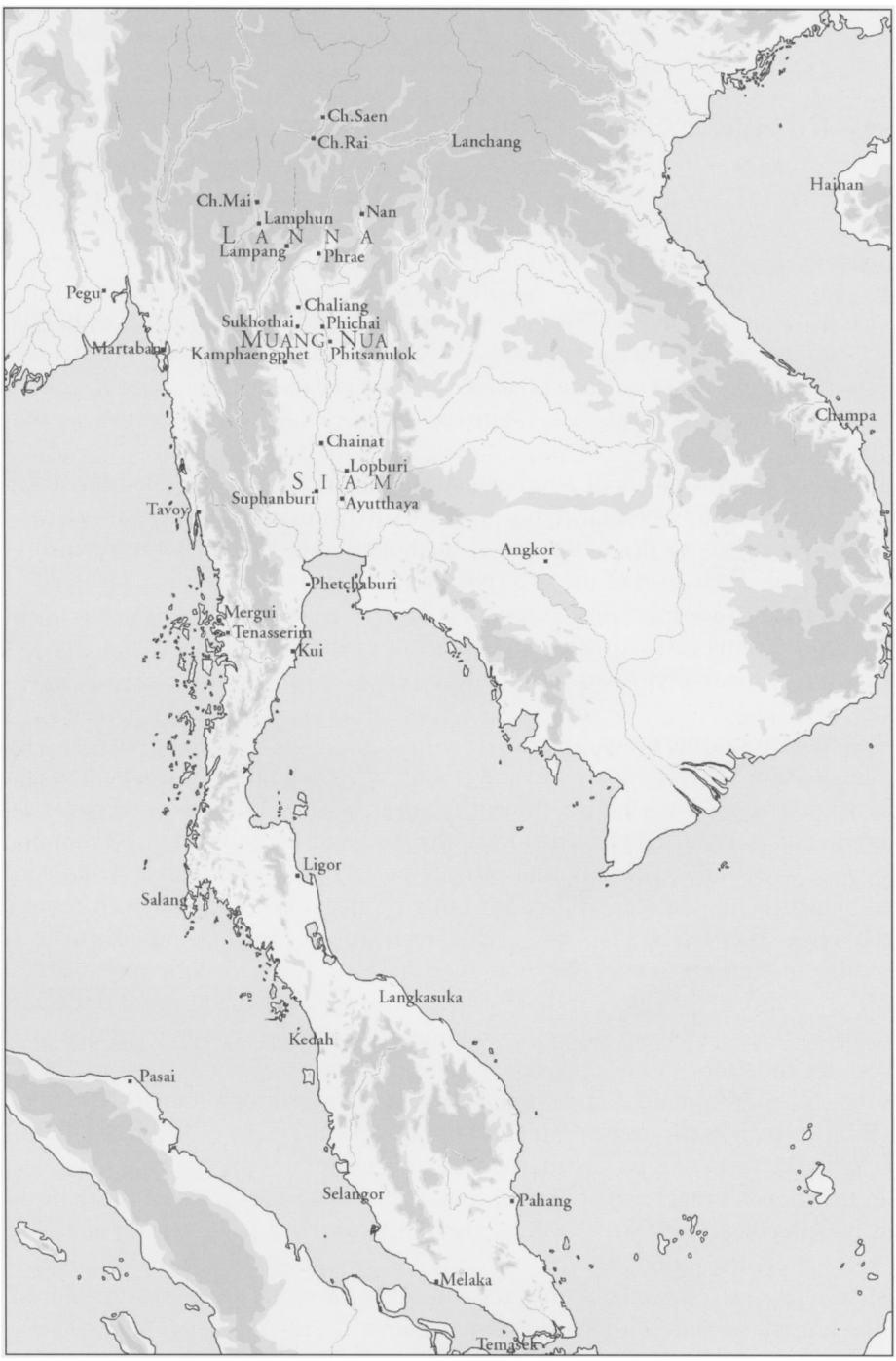

Map 1: Toponyms Mentioned in this Article

the western portions of the state, Khmer prestige and statecraft from Lopburi and the eastern provinces, and Chinese (and other Asian) commercial power concentrated at the center in the port capital' (p. 67).

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The two major studies of early Ayutthaya over the past generation – Charnvit Kasetsiri's *The rise of Ayudhya* (1976) and Srisakara Vallibhotama's *Sayam prathet* (1991) – also stressed the territorial frame. In Charnvit's original version (adjusted later, as will be discussed below) the rise of the Ayutthayan kingdom was a process of territorial agglomeration carried forward by the competing ambitions of local lords. Three local *muang* (Ayutthaya, Lopburi and Suphanburi) were forged into a federation under one ruling family. This confederation then developed a ring of outlying cities and finally absorbed Sukhothai and neutralised Angkor, emerging as the dominant power in the Chaophraya basin.[2] In Srisakara's study, the motor of history is a process of increasing anthropological complexity. Trade networks become more complex and populations become more mixed in both economic function and ethnic background, while political forms evolve to manage this complexity. By this process, society moves from household to village (*ban*) to *muang* and finally to *prathet* (state, country) and *anachak* (kingdom). The emergence of Ayutthaya is a climactic event in this process, the transition to a new anthropological stage, the foundation of *ratcha-anachak Sayam* – the baseline of modern history.[3] In their different ways, both Charnvit and Srisakara pictured the emergence of Ayutthaya as a process of territorial aggrandisement, and portrayed Ayutthaya from its inception as a land-based state inheriting elements from the hinterland Tai *muang* and from Angkor.

Since then, Ayutthaya's role as a commercial power has received increasing attention. Atsushi Kobata and Mitsuyu Matsuda made available translations from the Ryukyu archives on early trade between Japan and Ayutthaya, and Iwao Seiichi and Yoneo Ishii published analyses of this trade.[4] Dhiravat na Pombejra mined the Dutch archives, resulting in a string of publications on Ayutthaya as a commercial port.[5] Suebsaeng Promboon described Siam's tribute trade with China, and recently Geoff Wade has looked at the early stage in more detail.[6] The Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre, opened in 1990, has highlighted Ayutthaya as a 'port city'. Two recent collections on Ayutthaya's relations with the rest of Asia portray it as a great commercial city of its era.[7] In two articles published in the 1990s, Charnvit restated his account of Ayutthaya's rise with much greater attention to the role of trade. He concluded that its early role as a port,

2 Charnvit Kasetsiri, *The rise of Ayudhya: A history of Siam in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1976).

3 Sisak Wanliphodom [Srisakara Vallibhotama], *Sayam prathet* [Country of Siam] (Bangkok: Matichon, 1991), pp. 279-80.

4 Atsushi Kobata and Mitsuyu Matsuda, *Ryukyuan relations with Korea and South Sea countries: an annotated translation of documents in the* Rekidai Hôan (Kyoto: Atsushi Kobata, 1969); Iwao Seiichi, 'Japanese foreign trade in the 16th and 17th centuries', *Acta Asiatica*, 30 (1976): 1-18; and *idem.*, 'Reopening of the diplomatic and commercial relations between Japan and Siam during the Tokugawa period', *Acta Asiatica*, 4 (1963): 1-31; Yoneo Ishii, 'The *Rekidai Hôan* and some aspects of the Ayuthayan port polity in the fifteenth century', *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, 50 (1992): 81-92.

5 See, for example, Dhiravat na Pombejra, *Court, company and campong. Essays on the VOC presence in Ayutthaya* (Ayutthaya: Ayutthaya Historical Studies Centre, 1992).

6 Suebsaeng Promboon, 'Sino-Siamese tributary relations, 1282-1853' (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1972); Geoffrey P. Wade, 'The *Ming Shi-lu* (veritable records of the Ming Dynasty) as a source for Southeast Asian history, 14th to 17th centuries' (Ph.D. diss., University of Hong Kong, 1994).

7 *Ayudhya and Asia*, ed. Kajit Jittasevi (Bangkok: Thammasat University Press, 1995); *From Japan to Arabia: Ayutthaya's maritime relations with Asia*, ed. Kennon Breazeale (Bangkok: Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 1999).

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involvement in the China tribute trade and development of a trading bureaucracy gave Ayutthaya its 'unique characteristic' as 'both a hinterland and a maritime kingdom'.[8]

In this essay, I wish to push Charnvit's thinking a little further. He still stresses that Ayutthaya rose as a hinterland-style power on the basis of 'wet-rice cultivation and control of manpower', arguing that the drying of the swamps in the Chaophraya Delta made possible an expansion of rice production between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. This provided support for a large army which, after 1350, rapidly conquered and incorporated neighbouring territories, making Ayutthaya 'a very powerful land-based state'. The resulting access to the products of the hinterland along with the readiness to host a Chinese merchant community then 'turned it into an important center for maritime trade'.[9] In other words, for Charnvit Ayutthaya began as a hinterland power – the successor to Sukhothai and Angkor – and later developed the commercial dominance which gave the city its special 'hybrid' strength.

This essay will take a closer look at the maritime background of Ayutthaya, in response to a suggestion made over twenty years ago by Michael Vickery.[10] The argument is that it makes more sense to see Ayutthaya as a maritime power which subsequently developed as a territorial power, rather than vice versa. This has implications for how we imagine early Ayutthaya as a society and polity. It also suggests some reinterpretation of the subsequent landmark events in early Ayutthayan history – the Trailok reforms, the wars with Lanna and the sack of 1569.

Xian and Ayutthaya

In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, several port centres competed to gain larger shares of the trade ceded by a declining Srivijaya. One of these appears in the Chinese records for the first time in 1282/3 as 'Xian' (also transliterated as 'Hsien' or 'Sien'). In the past this was identified as Sukhothai, perhaps operating through a subordinate port on the Gulf of Siam; however, this identification is no longer tenable.[11] In the 1280s, the Chinese court included Xian on a list of *maritime* kingdoms spread across the peninsula, Sumatra, Lanka, and southern India to which it decided to send envoys to demand submission.[12] In 1296, Zhou Daguan located it fifteen days' travel southwest from Angkor, which suggests the lower delta rather than Sukhothai.[13] A Canton gazetteer from 1297–1307 recorded that the 'Country of Xian controls Shang-

8 Charnvit Kasetsiri, 'Ayudhya: Capital-port of Siam and its Chinese connection in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', *Journal of the Siam Society* [henceforth *JSS*], 80, 1 (1992): 75-9; *idem.*, 'Origins of a capital and seaport. The early settlement of Ayutthaya and its East Asian trade', in Breazeale ed., *From Japan to Arabia*, pp. 55-79.

9 Ibid., pp. 55, 62-4, 76-8; Charnvit, 'Ayudhya: Capital-port of Siam', p. 75.

10 Michael Vickery, 'A new *tamnan* about Ayudhya', *JSS*, 67 (1979): 176-7.

11 Geoff Wade, 'The *Ming shi-lu* as a source for Thai history – fourteenth to seventeenth centuries', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 31, 2 (2000): 257, fn. 13. Subsequent citations for Wade refer to this article rather than his dissertation cited above. On the identification with Sukhothai, see Charnvit, 'Ayudhya: Capital-port of Siam', p. 76.

12 Gordon H. Luce, 'The early Syam in Burma's history, a supplement', *JSS*, 47,1 (1959): 61, 76.

13 Zhou Daguan, *The customs of Cambodia* (Bangkok: Siam Society, 1992), p. xviii. On the correspondence between Georges Coedès and Paul Pelliot concerning this account, see Michael Vickery, 'Coedès' histories of Cambodia', *Silpakorn University International Journal*, 1, 1 (2000): 61-108. Zhou's reference is still problematic since Ayutthaya is actually northwest of Angkor.

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shui Su-gu-di.'[14] 'Su-gu-di' is clearly Sukhothai, and hence 'Xian' is not Sukhothai. 'Shang-shui' may be another place-name, or may indicate literally that Su-gu-di was 'up-river' from Xian. The *Mingshi* reports that 'Xian was later divided in two countries, Lavo and Xian. In Xian the soil is barren and not suitable for agriculture. The terrain of Lavo is a fine, level plain and most of the plantations yield good crops, and Xian depended on them for supplies.'[15] Sukhothai was not barren, and was not likely to have imported rice upstream from Lavo (Lopburi). Ma Huan, the recorder of the Zheng He voyages under the Ming, reported in 1433 that Xian was poor for agriculture because the land was 'wet and swampy'; it may have been 'barren' because it was located at the edge of a seaboard swamp.[16]

Xian was clearly located close to the gulf, either as one *muang* or as a confederation.[17] Perhaps the best candidate is Ayutthaya, or the *muang* which existed on the site prior to its legendary foundation in 1351. There are traces of an earlier Khmer-style settlement to the east of the island which contained the later city. Wat Phanan Choeng, adjacent to this site, is dated by the *Luang Prasoet chronicle* to 1324/5.[18] The Sukhothai monk Sumana visited Ayutthaya in search of religious texts around the 1320s before travelling on to Sri Lanka.[19] The first Chinese envoy visited Xian in 1370; the names of kings cited in the Chinese records from this point onwards leave no doubt that the polity referred to is Ayutthaya.[20]

Apart from Xian, the Chinese scribes also knew about 'Su-men-bang' (probably Suphanburi) and 'Luo-hu' (Lavo, Lopburi) and recognised that there was some relationship between them. Xian and Luo-hu were often written as a yoked pair, 'Xian-

14 Tatsuro Yamamoto, 'Thailand as it is referred to in the *Da-de Nan-hai zhi* at the beginning of the fourteenth century', *Journal of East-West Maritime Relations*, 1 (1989): 50-1. Yamamoto stresses that 'control' implies 'commercial or economic superiority', not necessarily political dominance.

15 Adapted from Robert S. Wicks, *Money, markets, and trade in early Southeast Asia: The development of indigenous monetary systems to AD 1400* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1992), pp. 177-8; Tilemann Grimm, 'Thailand in the light of official Chinese historiography: A chapter in the "History of the Ming Dynasty"', *JSS*, 49, 1 (1961): 2.

16 Ma Huan, *Ying-yai sheng-lan. 'The overall survey of the ocean's shores'*, tr. J. V. G. Mills (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1997), p. 103. However, another of the Zheng He scribes, Fei Xin, reported that 'the fields are level and fertile, the grain is mostly abundant and ripe'; Fei Hsin [Fei Xin], *Hsing-ch'a sheng-lan, The overall survey of the star raft*, tr. J. V. G. Mills (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 1996), p. 42. According to geologists, the sea level around 4000 BCE was 4 metres above the present level, placing the site of Ayutthaya under water; the sea then retreated in phases to approximate its current level by around 500 CE. The area around the Chaophraya probably remained marshy for some time, and was still being drained when the first European descriptions were written in the sixteenth century; P. Pramojanee and T. Jarupongsakul, 'Evolution of landforms and the site of ancient cities and communities in lower Chaophraya plain', in Kajit ed., *Ayudhya and Asia*, pp. 15-35.

17 Yoneo Ishii draws attention to a line (*Syangkayodhapura kimuta ng Dharamanagari*) from the Javanese text *Deça-warnana*, which Stuart Robson has translated as 'the Siamese of Ayodhya and also of Dharmanagari', suggesting that 'Siam' described a larger unit than Ayutthaya alone; Yoneo Ishii, 'A reinterpretation of Thai history with special reference to the pre-modern period', keynote address at the 8th International Conference on Thai Studies, Nakhon Phanom, 9-12 January 2002. Wade notes that a Chinese representation of 'Krung Ayutthaya' appears in the Chinese records in 1444 as a title of Siam's ruler and later in 1554 as the polity's name ('*Ming shi-lu* as a source', p. 259).

18 Charnvit, 'Ayudhya: Capital-port of Siam', p. 77; *The royal chronicles of Ayutthaya*, tr. Richard D. Cushman [henceforth *RCA*] (Bangkok: Siam Society, 2000) (Luang Prasoet version, henceforth *LP*), p. 10.

19 Prasert na Nagara and A. B. Griswold, 'King Lödaiya of Sukhodaya and his contemporaries', reprinted in their *Epigraphic and historical studies* (Bangkok: Siam Society, 1992), pp. 326, 337, 340.

20 Wade, '*Ming shi-lu* as a source', pp. 257-8.

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luo(-hu)' – a term used by the Chinese (along with 'Xian') to refer to Ayutthaya/Siam until the nineteenth century. Accounts dated 1349 variously record that 'Xian submitted to Luo-hu' or 'Xian brought Luo-hu to submission.' The confusion is probably the result of copying error. A 1374 record mentions a 'prince of Su-men-bang' who is 'heir to the king of the country of Xian-luo-hu'.[21] Clearly the three towns of Suphanburi, Lopburi, and Ayutthaya were closely related; Charnvit has ingeniously reconstructed their connections. Of the three, Suphanburi and Lopburi had the deeper histories, which may explain why Ayutthaya was called by the Arabs and Malays 'Shahr'un-nuwi', 'the new city'.[22]

Xian and the peninsula

From the end of the thirteenth century, Xian contested for a share of post-Srivijayan regional trade. It sent expeditions south, provoking other powers to protest to China, which in 1295 forbade it to attack Malayu and Jambi.[23] Northern Sumatra chronicles report attacks by 'Siam' on the pepper entrepot at Samudra-Pasai in the early fourteenth century. The Pasai chronicle records that 'in all some hundred boats large and small' were sent for the attack, and describes a climactic battle extending over two months and ending with a massacre of the invading army. The *Sejarah Melayu* has a different version, with the 'Siamese' forces arriving 'in the guise of traders' and abducting the Pasai ruler to their capital where he was put to work 'to tend the palace fowls' until a Pasai noble negotiated his release.[24] In the early fourteenth century, Temasek (probably Singapore) also came under the influence of 'Siam', which attacked it shortly before 1332 and then plundered the straits. Arab geographers describe Temasek as the southern extent of the coast of Siam.[25] In 1349, the Chinese traveller Wang Dayuan reported that 'the people [of Xian] are much given to piracy; whenever there is an uprising in any other country, they at once embark in as many as a hundred junks with full cargoes of sago, and start off and by the vigour of their attack they secure what they want'.[26]

At the end of the fourteenth century, Xian/Ayutthaya's influence on the lower reaches of the peninsula began to diminish, but slowly. In 1392, its vassal ruler was

21 Ibid., pp. 257, fn. 13, and 259.

22 A. H. Hill, 'Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai. A Romanised version with an English translation, an introduction and notes', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* [henceforth *JMBRAS*], 33, 2 (1960): 3-215. The *Mingshilu* also mentions another (possible) place which may be 'Ming Tai' or 'Mentai' (? Muang tai) as part of the same political network. There may also be 'new' and 'old' versions/locations of this place; perhaps this 'newness' indicates places whose rulers (and followers) shifted location; see Wade, '*Ming shi-lu* as a source', pp. 259-60; and Yamamoto, 'Thailand as it is referred to', p. 52. Charnvit's study of the connections among the three places is in *Rise of Ayudhya*, ch. 5.

23 E. Thadeus Flood, 'Sukhothai-Mongol relations: A note on relevant Chinese and Thai sources (with translation)', *JSS*, 57, 2 (1969): 224; Georges Coedès, *The Indianized states of Southeast Asia*, ed. Walter F. Vella and tr. Susan B. Cowling (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1968), pp. 204-7; Luce, 'Early Syam: A supplement', p. 90.

24 Hill, 'Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai', p. 127; C. C. Brown, 'The Malay annals translated from Raffles MS 18', *JMBRAS*, 25, 2 (1952): 45-7.

25 Gerald R. Tibbetts, *A study of the Arabic texts containing materials on South-East Asia* (Leiden and London: Brill, 1979), p. 240; Kenneth R. Hall, *Maritime trade and state development in early Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1985), p. 240. On the attack, see O.W. Wolters, *The fall of Srivijaya in Malay history* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 79.

26 W. W. Rockhill, 'Notes on the relations and trade of China with the eastern archipelago and the coasts of the Indian Ocean during the fourteenth century', *T'oung Pao*, 16 (1915): 100.

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thrown out of Temasek and, according to Tomé Pires, Siam sent a Pattani man to exact revenge. In the subsequent squabble, a Malay prince settled at Melaka, which over the following decades came to dominate the straits and inherited much of the power of Srivijaya. Initially, though, it still had to recognise Ayutthaya, and the *Sejarah Melayu* records that Melaka's founder Paramesawara had to flee north from a Siamese attack.[27] In 1404, Iskander of Melaka sent tribute to Ayutthaya, and later Melaka sent another mission there to get food supplies.[28] In 1407 the Siamese again raided Sumatra, Pahang and Melaka, and took away the official Chinese seals, provoking another Chinese rebuke. The Chinese set up a stone tablet defining Melaka's status after which, according to Fei Xin, Xian 'did not dare to disturb' Melaka.[29]

Ayutthaya does not seem to have been greatly deterred, however, as in 1419 the Chinese again warned it against sending troops to Melaka, and two years later its ruler 'offered tribute of local products in contrition for the crime of having attacked' the Malay kingdom.[30] Ma Huan, who probably visited Ayutthaya in 1421/2, recorded that 'they like to practise fighting on water, [and] their king constantly despatches his commanders to subject neighbouring countries'. He also noted that Melaka 'paid an annual tribute of forty *liang* of gold; [and] if it were not [to pay], then Xian-luo would send men to attack it'.[31] In 1431, Melaka complained to the Chinese court that Ayutthaya 'had long wanted to invade their country…They requested that the Court send persons to instruct the king of Siam to no longer oppress or mistreat their country.'[32] In the same year, a Ryukyu ship reported of Palembang that 'the King [of Siam] had punished the previous chief and had put a new chief in power'.[33]

Reports of Ayutthaya's activities on the peninsula fade from the Chinese records after the 1430s, but other sources show that it continued to lay claims to suzerainty over Melaka and the lower peninsula. In 1445/6, according to the Malay annals, Ayutthaya demanded that Melaka submit tribute, and responded to the refusal by sending 'a vast army' overland to attack. The annals describe the attack as a failure, with the Ayutthayan forces abandoning wooden items of baggage which sprouted to form forests north of the city. The Thai chronicles mention 120,000 prisoners from an expedition to 'Pathai Kasem', which Geoffrey Marrison suggested may refer to the Kasim river at Melaka.[34] In 1455/6, the Ayutthaya chronicle states 'an army was assembled and sent to seize Malacca', but the Malay annals claim the force retreated after the Melakans started fires to simulate a much larger complement of defending troops.[35] Immediately after this, Melaka sent a

27 Wolters, *Fall of Srivijaya*, p. 109; Brown, 'Malay annals', p. 55; Geoff Wade, 'Melaka in Ming dynasty texts', *JMBRAS*, 70, 1 (1997): 43.
28 Wolters, *Fall of Srivijaya*, pp. 154-5.
29 Fei Hsin, *Hsing-ch'a sheng-lan*, pp. 53-4; Grimm, 'Thailand in the light', p. 7; Wade, '*Ming shi-lu* as a source', p. 273.
30 Ibid., p. 273.
31 Ma Huan, *Ying-yai sheng-lan*, pp. 107-8. Fei Xin phrased the same information slightly differently: 'The customs are violent and fierce: they particularly respect bravery. They invade and despoil neighbouring regions…. and are practised and skilful at fighting on water' (*Hsing-ch'a sheng-lan*, pp. 42-3).
32 Wade, '*Ming shi-lu* as a source', pp. 273-4.
33 Kobata and Matsuda, *Ryukyuan relations*, p. 65.
34 *RCA* (*LP*), p. 16; Brown, 'Malay annals', pp. 64-6; Geoffrey E. Marrison, 'The Siamese wars with Malacca during the reign of Muzaffar Shah', *JMBRAS*, 22, 1 (1949): 61-3. Michael Vickery, however, insists the location is in the western Khmer region; see his 'The 2/K.125 Fragment, a lost chronicle of Ayutthaya', *JSS*, 65, 1 (1977): 64.
35 *RCA* (*LP*), p. 16; Brown, 'Malay annals', p. 68; Marrison, 'Siamese wars with Malacca', pp. 63-4.

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tribute mission to China and a mission of peace to Ayutthaya; the latter's reply pointedly addressed the Melakan ruler as a subordinate. But in the Malay annals, peace is made: the Melaka envoy helps Ayutthaya in a war on a neighbouring country, is rewarded with the gift of a princess, and returns to Melaka with a Siamese envoy who is warmly received. Over the next few years, Melaka took control of Pahang and the Ayutthayan attacks appear to have ceased, but Tomé Pires, writing in the 1510s, noted that the two Malay kingdoms had finally rebelled against Ayutthayan domination 22 years earlier.[36]

The annals and Chinese records stress the political aspects of Ayutthaya's involvement on the peninsula. Pires' account from the end of this period indicates the scale and variety of the Siam–Melaka trade before the Portuguese arrival. 'Up to thirty junks a year' carried Siamese rice, dried salted fish, arak, and vegetables to Melaka. In addition, 'From Siam come lac, benzoin, brazil, lead, tin, silver, gold, ivory, cassia fistula … vessels of cast copper and gold, ruby and diamond rings … a large quantity of cheap coarse Siamese cloth.' On the return journey to Siam, the junks carried

> male and female slaves, which they take in quantities, white sandalwood, pepper, quicksilver, vermilion, opium, *azernefe*, cloves, mace, nutmeg, wide and narrow muslins, and Kling cloths in the fashion of Siam, camlets, rosewater, carpets, brocades from Cambay, white cowries, wax, Borneo camphor, pachak which are roots like dry rampion, [and] gall-nuts (*gualhas*).[37]

Ayutthaya transferred its attention to the west coast of the peninsula. By the 1460s Tenasserim was under its influence, and four inscriptions from 1462-4 record the Ayutthayan ruler conferring titles on nobles and senior monks there. In 1488/9, an Ayutthayan army captured Tavoy.[38] These ports gave Ayutthaya access to the Indian ocean and beyond. The fifteenth-century Persian historian Abd-al Razzaq recorded that the traders of Ormuz visited both Tenasserim and 'Shahr-i-nao'.[39] After the Portuguese capture of Melaka in 1511, Duarte Barbosa collated information from the sea captains and envoys sent out to explore the region. He reported that the Ayutthaya ruler controlled ports on both sides of the peninsula – especially Tenasserim, Mergui, Kedah and Selangor – to which ships from Arabia and Bengal brought copper, quicksilver, vermilion, cloth, silk, saffron coral and opium. In the 1550s João de Barros included the west coast ports of Tavoy, Mergui, Tenasserim, Rey Tagala (near Martaban) and Cholom (possibly Salang, modern Phuket) among Ayutthaya's tributaries. He also grouped Ayutthaya along with China and Vijayanagar as the three great powers of Asia.[40]

Xian and China

Before the mid-fourteenth century, various cities on the gulf sent missions to China. Lavo sent four between 1289 and 1299, while Xian sent eight between 1292 and 1323. Missions also arrived from Phetchaburi in 1294 and Suphanburi in 1374. In 1299, the

36 Brown, 'Malay annals', pp. 70-2; Muhammed Haji Salleh, 'Ayudhya in Sejarah Melayu', in Kajit ed., *Ayudhya and Asia*, pp. 126-32; Tomé Pires, *The Suma oriental of Tome Pires*, tr. and ed. A. Cortesão (London: Hakluyt Society, 1944), vol. 1, p. 108; Marrison, 'Siamese wars with Malacca', p. 65.

37 Pires, *Suma oriental*, pp. 107-8.

38 Michael Vickery, 'The Khmer inscriptions of Tenasserim: A reinterpretation', *JSS*, 61, 1 (1977): 51-70; *RCA* (*LP*), p. 18.

39 Tibbetts, *Study of the Arabic texts*, p. 99.

40 J. J. de Campos, 'Early Portuguese accounts of Thailand', *JSS*, 32 (1940): 9.

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Xian envoy petitioned for special marks of favour ('saddles, bridle-bits, white horses and golden-threaded garments') on grounds of earlier precedent. The request was turned down, but it suggests Xian already had big ideas about itself.[41]

In 1368 the newly established Ming dynasty, concerned by an adverse balance of trade draining away silver, and by increasing difficulties in controlling rich merchants and foreigners in the port cities, banned private trade and funnelled everything through the tribute system. Only tribute missions were allowed to trade, and only recognised states were permitted to offer tribute. Over the next century, Xian/Ayutthaya exploited these new arrangements to become the Chinese authorities' favourite trading partner. The *Mingshi* lists forty-four 'customary trading articles' from Xian, more than for any other port. These included exotic animals (black bear, white monkey, six-legged tortoise, elephant), aromatics, textiles and pepper.[42] Particularly after the authorities imposed a tighter passport system of regulation to reduce tribute missions and squeeze imports, the Ayutthayan traders developed business outside the official lines. An Ayutthayan ship wrecked off Hainan in 1374 was 'suspected to be (just) a foreign merchant' because there was no official manifest and many of the items were not on the approved list.[43] In 1457 and 1481 Xian traders were rebuked for privately purchasing salt and children outside the tribute framework.[44]

However, Ayutthaya paid enough attention to the niceties of official trade to ensure these (mutually profitable) indiscretions were overlooked. Ayutthayan traders were specifically exempted from prosecution, and the *Mingshi* reported that 'Xian-luo is the most familiar' of the 167 ports with which the Chinese transacted. Xian was the first to be given one of the new Chinese certificates of trade in 1383 (followed by fourteen other places). The Taizu emperor (r. 1370–98) considered that only Ayutthaya and the Khmer were well-behaved, and rejected missions from several other ports.[45] In the early fifteenth century, Ayutthaya asked to be supplied with the Chinese new set of official weights and measures for local use. Damaged ships were repaired or replaced in Chinese ports. In 1480, the emperor sent the Xian ruler a set of red-dragon robes, which Wade notes 'was very unusual in Ming foreign relations and suggests a relationship of some closeness'.[46]

Siam sent 68 tribute missions to China between 1369 and 1439, far more than the Chinese stipulation of one every three years, and more than any other port (Champa came second with 58).[47] The private trade included the aromatics and exotics which were the staples of tribute, but also textiles and slaves. From China, Ayutthaya imported luxury fabrics, porcelain, medicines and currency (copper cash and paper money). The amounts were significant: in 1387, the Xian envoys brought six tonnes of pepper and sixty of

41 Luce, 'Early Syam in Burma's history', pp. 140, 143, 187; Wicks, *Money, markets and trade*, p. 178; Grimm, 'Thailand in the light', pp. 8-10; Wade, '*Ming shi-lu* as a source', pp. 285-7; Charnvit, *Rise of Ayudhya*, pp. 79-81, 111-13; Flood, 'Sukhothai-Mongol relations', p. 225; Luce, 'Early Syam: A supplement', p. 90.

42 Wicks, *Money, markets and trade*, p. 180; Charnvit, 'Ayudhya: Capital-port of Siam', p. 77.

43 Wicks, *Money, markets and trade*, p. 181; Grimm, 'Thailand in the light', p. 4.

44 Wade, '*Ming shi-lu* as a source', p. 270.

45 Grimm, 'Thailand in the light', pp. 5-6; Takeshi Hamashita, 'Ayudhya-China relation [*sic*] in the tribute trade system through Ryukyu trade network', in Kajit ed., *Ayudhya and Asia*, pp. 49-77; Wolters, *Fall of Srivijaya*, p. 66.

46 Wade, '*Ming shi-lu* as a source', p. 272.

47 Anthony Reid, 'Documenting the rise and fall of Ayudhya as a regional trade centre', in Kajit ed., *Ayudhya and Asia*, pp. 5-14.

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sapanwood. By the 1490s, according to Wade, the private trade 'appears … to have far outstripped the formal, official trade'.[48] Through its deft exploitation of the Chinese official system and its lacunae, Ayutthaya emerged as the dominant trading centre on the gulf.

Chinese settlements appeared in most of the ports (and political centres) of the region following the expansion of Chinese trade from the eleventh century onwards. Zhou Daguan attested to the presence of Chinese in both Angkor and Champa, and G. William Skinner suggested there were communities in all the gulf ports before the thirteenth century.[49] In 1282, some 200 Song refugees fled to the gulf and the Mongol Yuan dynasty sent a mission to Xian to recover them. In 1289, a Chinese official fleeing the Mongol army took up residence at Xian, suggesting it was a known place of refuge.[50] Chinese adopted the image in Ayutthaya's Wat Phanan Choeng as a place of pilgrimage, and when the Ayutthaya ruler built Wat Ratburana in the 1420s, Chinese and Arabic merchants made donations to the project, and deposited records and religious objects in the crypt.[51]

The most elaborate of the several foundation myths of Ayutthaya also has a Chinese connection. Exiled from home for sexual misadventures, the son of a 'king of several provinces in China' travels with a fleet of junks to the peninsula, establishes first Langkasuka and then Ligor (present-day Nakhon Si Thammarat), achieves mercantile success, marries the Chinese emperor's daughter, and then moves gradually north to found Kui, Phetchaburi, Bangkok and other places before establishing Ayutthaya. This story is intercut with two other staples of the *tamnan* (religious or folk history) tradition: a Buddhist layer, including the Buddha's visit to Siam and prediction of Ayutthaya's glory; and a Brahmanic layer with a *rishi* (ascetic or hermit) identifying the site, guiding the founder through various magical processes and quelling the local *naga* spirit. The additional 'Chinese layer' is perhaps best read as a legendary account of the importance of the Chinese in the foundation and development of all the port-cities of the gulf, especially Ayutthaya. The son-in-law relationship to the emperor is invoked to explain 'why the kings of Siam are singularly privileged in being allowed to send their junks to Canton and ambassadors to the Chinese kings'.[52]

Founding Ayutthaya

Charnvit and Srisakara imagine early Ayutthaya as a land-oriented state, a natural successor to Sukhothai and Angkor. In fact, however, it seems to have emerged among the port towns on the upper gulf coast and its associated estuaries. It was active in trade and maritime tribute collection along the peninsula to the south for at least half a century before its official foundation at 7.40 a.m. on Friday, 4 March 1351 (as indicated in the Ayutthaya chronicles). Indeed it seems to have been successful in demanding submission and tribute from ports on the peninsula from the late thirteenth to the late fifteenth centuries.

48 Wade, '*Ming shi-lu* as a source', pp. 270-1.
49 G. William Skinner, *Chinese society in Thailand: An analytical history* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), pp. 1-2.
50 Charnvit, *Rise of Ayudhya*, p. 66; Wade, '*Ming shi-lu* as a source', p. 257, fn. 1; Ishii, 'Reinterpretation of Thai history'.

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The new post-Srivijaya trading centres that appeared on the peninsula and around the archipelago had a distinctive political form. The rulers were more likely to be merchants than warriors, and wealth (that is, commercial success) rather than lineage was the key credential for claiming power. Their capitals were usually situated on the lower reaches of rivers, where they could dominate the flow of exotic trade goods from the interior. They built armies to command the trade routes from the interior and to discourage rival neighbours. Their livelihood was based on trade, and they showed little interest in controlling the land or peasantry of the interior except perhaps for an adjacent area needed for food supplies for their cosmopolitan populations. They showed only limited interest in religious leadership, and invested little in resplendent monuments, leaving little or nothing to posterity as inscriptions. Kenneth Hall characterises the appearance of one such state (Samudra–Pasai) in its own chronicle as a 'cosmopolitan urban centre on the edge of jungle', while Jan Wisseman Christie describes the Majapahit capital as 'little more than a series of large royal and elite compounds with attached religious monuments, surrounded by a cluster of large villages'.[53]

It seems likely that Xian began in this model, though perhaps with one variation: it was also a religious centre, owing to the long history of Buddhism in the area and the Khmer influence at Lavo/Lopburi. A thirteenth-century account of 'Chen-li-fu' – probably a nearby coastal state – mentioned that people 'tend to follow the law of the Buddha', while Ma Huan in the 1420s observed that the ruler of Xian-luo was 'a firm believer in the Buddhist religion' and that 'the people who become priests and nuns are exceedingly numerous'.[54]

The seven different stories which Charnvit recounts about U Thong, Ayutthaya's legendary founder, variously identify him as a Chinese adventurer, a ruler of one of the other *muang* around the head of the gulf, or a Tai prince migrating southwards from the hinterland *muang*.[55] Ma Huan adds another possibility by identifying the Xian ruler as being 'of the So-li race', possibly meaning a south Indian (Chola); this seems unlikely but perhaps substantiates an exotic origin. It is impossible to adjudicate which if any of these stories has more truth. The tale of a Chinese adventurer (summarised above) has strong parallels with the foundation myths of many trading port polities in the archipelago, where a Chinese or other merchant arrives in a 'fully laden ship', establishes the polity, founds its wealth and becomes ruler of a kingdom which 'was, in the final analysis, a commercial venture'.[56]

The variety of foundation myths suggests that Ayutthaya began as a trading power whose dominant figures had little interest in history and that these stories accumulated later when the city became a territorial power whose rulers needed a history and genealogy. Inconsistencies in the records of the early dynastic chronology also hint that it was reconstructed later, when such matters became important. It is tempting also to read the variety of foundation stories as a reflection of the city's cosmopolitan nature,

53 Hall, *Maritime trade and state development*, p. 215; Jan Wisseman Christie, 'States without cities: Demographic trends in early Java', *Indonesia*, 52 (October 1991): 23-40. For an overview of post-Srivijaya developments, see Wolters, *Fall of Srivijaya*, ch. 1.

54 O.W. Wolters, 'Chên-li-fu, a state on the Gulf of Siam at the beginning of the 13th Century', *JSS*, 48, 2 (1960): 2; Ma Huan, *Ying-yai sheng-lan*, p. 103.

55 Charnvit, *Rise of Ayudhya*, ch. 4.

56 Pierre-Yves Manguin, 'The merchant and the king: Political myths of Southeast Asian coastal polities', *Indonesia*, 52 (October 1991): 41-54.

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with local (Dvaravati-Mon, Khmer), immigrant Tai, Chinese and other maritime exotic (Indian, Malay) elements. Ma Huan noted there was a Chinese population in Xian, but also 'five or six hundred families of foreigners' in 'Shang Shui' (which may be a place name, or may again just mean up-river). A century later, Pires described Ayutthaya as very cosmopolitan, with settlements of 'Arabs, Persians, Bengalees, many Klings, Chinese and other nationalities'.[57]

Ma Huan also left the first description of Xian:

> The houses of the populace are constructed in storeyed form; in the upper [part of the house] they do not join planks together [to make a floor], but they use the wood of the areca-palm, which they cleave into strips resembling bamboo splits; [these strips] are laid close together and bound very securely with rattans; on [this platform] they spread rattan mats and bamboo matting, and on these they do all their sitting, sleeping, eating and resting.... The men dress their hair in a chignon, and use a white head-cloth to bind round the head [and] on the body they wear a long gown. The women also pin up their hair in a chignon, and wear a long gown.... It is their custom that all affairs are managed by their wives; both the king of the country and the common people, if they have matters which require thought and deliberation – punishments light and heavy, all trading transactions great and small – they all follow the decisions of their wives, [for] the mental capacity of the wives certainly exceeds that of the men.... The customs of the people are noisy and licentious.[58]

The description has the feel of a modest and slightly rowdy port town; the prominent role of women suggests a trading centre rather than a militarised court. Both Ma Huan and Fei Xin mention religious practice, but describe no imposing religious structure. Ma Huan's description of the ruler is also strikingly modest:

> The house in which the king resides is rather elegant, neat and clean.... As to the king's dress: he uses a white cloth to wind round his head; on the upper [part of his body] he wears no garment; [and] round the lower [part he wears] a silk-embroidered kerchief, adding a waist-band of brocaded silk gauze. When going about [the king] mounts an elephant or else rides in a sedan-chair, while a man holds [over him] a gold-handed umbrella made of *chiao-chang* leaves, [which is] very elegant.[59]

Chinese descriptions of other peninsula states (and Zhou Daguan's description of the Angkor ruler) include great palaces, large processions and much gold ornamentation. The Xian ruler's abode is no more than 'elegant, neat and clean'. His clothing seems little different from the average, and he travels around with only one umbrella.

Ma Huan also gave some impression of the scale of Xian. He wrote that 'the country is a thousand *li* in circumference, the outer mountains steep and rugged, the inner land

57 Pires, *Suma oriental*, p. 104; Ma Huan, *Ying-yai sheng-lan*, p. 106. Mills identifies 'Shang shui' as Lopburi but this is unlikely given the consistent Chinese usage of 'Luo-hu' for that *muang*. Ma Huan locates Shang Shui 'over two hundred *li*' (about 67 miles) to the north-west, which is almost exactly right for Chainat. Nakhon Sawan is a little further, but may be a better bet because of its strategic location and its background as a Khmer-influenced place since at least the twelfth century; David K. Wyatt, 'Relics, oaths and politics in thirteenth-century Siam', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 32, 1 (2001): 9-14.
58 Ma Huan, *Ying-yai sheng-lan*, pp. 103, 104, 107.
59 Ibid., p. 103.

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wet and swampy'. According to the Ayutthaya chronicle, around 1420 the ruler appointed three sons to rule Suphanburi, Siracha (or San), and Chainat.[60] An oval centred on Ayutthaya, stretching from the Chaophraya estuary up to Chainat, and including Suphanburi to the west and Lopburi to the east, would roughly match Ma Huan's thousand *li* (about 560 kilometres). This was probably the extent of Xian/Ayutthaya in the early fifteenth century.

From port city to territorial power

Ayutthaya had two very specific roles in China's trade. First, it was a supplier of the exotic goods (aromatics, animals, ornaments) demanded in the Chinese luxury market. Second, it acted as an entrepot or distribution centre for China's exports of silk, ceramics and other manufactures. Initially, the first role was more important, but China's concern over its chronic trade imbalance and silver drain meant that Ayutthaya's real value became its willingness to act as an export distribution centre. These commercial roles underlay Ayutthaya's political strategy. To increase the supply of exotic goods from the forest and hills, it needed influence in the interior. To act as an effective entrepot, it needed to develop distribution routes, especially across the neck of the peninsula to the westward-oriented markets of the Indian Ocean. Initially the first objective predominated, but once Europeans barged into the trading networks along the southern arc from India through Melaka to the archipelago, Ayutthaya's transit role in an alternative northern trans-isthmian route grew in importance. These two objectives underlay Ayutthaya's evolution from trading state to territorial power.

While Xian was aggressive with maritime attacks down the peninsula through the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the only record of land-based aggression is the attack on Angkor in the 1290s when, according to Zhou, 'whole villages [had] been laid waste' and 'universal military service was required'.[61] This relatively pacific picture changes in the 1370s, when Xian turned its attention to the north. Ayutthaya was probably pursuing the strategy adopted by all river-mouth states of exerting influence over the hinterland to secure flows of export goods. The *muang nua* or 'northern cities' (Phitsanulok, Sukhothai, Sawankhalok/Chaliang, Kamphaengphet, etc.) were an important source of trade goods, as were the areas beyond.[62] ('Northern' in this context refers to the northern-central region, as opposed to the culturally and linguistically distinct Northern Thai kingdom of Lanna centred at Chiang Mai.) Ma Huan indicated in the 1420s that there were trade routes that led north all the way into Yunnan 'by a back entrance'. Ralph Fitch in the 1580s noted that 'to Iamahey [Chiang Mai] come many marchants out of China and bring great store of muske, golde, siluer and many other things of China works'. João de Barros recorded of Siam that 'the little manufacture there is, such as silver and precious stones, comes from the Kingdom of Chiangmai'.[63]

Most historians have described Ayutthaya's military exploits in terms of 'conquest' and 'absorption'; the reality seems a lot more subtle. This northern thrust developed in

60 *RCA* (*LP*), p. 15; Chainat is not necessarily the modern location of this toponym.

61 Zhou Daguan, *Customs of Cambodia*, pp. 65, 71.

62 See 'Translation of Jeremias van Vliet's Description of the kingdom of Siam by L. F. van Ravenswaay', *JSS*, 7 (1910): 27, 67.

63 Ma Huan, *Ying-yai sheng-lan*, p. 106; J. Horton Ryley, *Ralph Fitch, England's pioneer to India and Burma* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899), p. 171; *Da Ásia de João de Barros*, quoted in *Thailand and Portugal: 476 years of friendship*, 2nd edn (Bangkok: Embassy of Portugal, 1987), p. 48.

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four stages. In the first, which extended over the last three decades of the fourteenth century, Ayutthaya raided northwards, apparently with the main aim of seizing manpower. In 1371/2, Borommaracha 'obtained all the northern cities', meaning Sukhothai and outlying *muang*. 'Obtained' did not mean submission and control, however, and he ventured north again in 1373/4, 1375/6, 1376/7 and 1378/9, with varying degrees of success. In 1375/6 he 'brought back a great many families' from Phitsanulok, and in the following year captured 'many *thao*, *phraya*, troops, *khun* and *mün*'. In 1386/7, Borommaracha's troops attacked Chiang Mai and Lampang but 'were unsuccessful'.[64] Around 1390 the Ayutthayan army defeated Chiang Mai, and left only an 'appropriate' number of people in the city while 'the remaining men and women were forcibly removed, by families, south'.[65] This concentration on people-raiding suggests Ayutthaya needed more manpower to staff the army required for its transition from maritime to territorial power.

Intharacha (r. 1409-24) used Ayutthaya's trading links to compensate for the manpower deficit. According to the Van Vliet chronicle, 'he loved weapons so much that he sent various missions with junks to other countries to buy weapons'. Among the goods brought by the Ryukyu ships was sulphur for gunpowder.[66] As noted above, Ayutthaya also imported people from both China and the lower peninsula. In the early fifteenth century, during the second stage of its northward expansion, Ayutthaya reached some accommodation with the northern cities. In 1419/20 it seized an opportunity when the Phitsanulok ruler died and 'all the northern cities were in confusion'. On this occasion, the chronicles mention no seizure of people but specify that the local rulers 'came out and paid homage'. Although Ayutthaya does not seem to have established any more permanent control, it repeated the exercise of demanding submission at regular intervals. In 1431/2 an Ayutthayan army attacked Angkor, carried away people and religious treasures, and installed a Thai prince as ruler.[67]

By the 1440s Ayutthaya could draw on the military resources of the northern cities. In the third stage of its expansion, it used these resources to attack farther north into Lanna. In 1442/3 and 1444/5, the Ayutthayan forces attacked Chiang Mai with help from the ruler of Chaliang-Sukhothai.[68] Although defeated, this additional force would eventually prove decisive. The chronicle accounts of these years are confusing because of ambiguities in the dynastic succession, as well as possible muddling of stories. According to the Luang Prasoet chronicle, Chiang Mai attacked the northern cities in 1451/2 and again in 1461/2. In 1462/3, an Ayutthaya general 'led his forces to Sukhothai and reduced the city to submission as before'.[69] According to the Chiang Mai chronicle, the Ayutthaya

64 *RCA (LP)*, p. 11 (1371/2); p. 12 (1375/6, 1386/7); the Thai terms designate ranks of various kinds.
65 *RCA* (British Museum version [henceforth *BM*]), p. 13. This attack appears only in the later chronicles and may be a spurious invention according to Michael Vickery, 'Cambodia after Angkor. The chronicular evidence for the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries' (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1977), pp. 384-93. However, the Chiang Mai chronicle has an (undated) attack by 'southerners' towards the end of the chronicle's account of the reign of Kuna, who probably died in 1400. In this account 'the Southerners were broken, and fled back to the South'; *The Chiang Mai chronicle* [henceforth *CMC*], ed. and tr. David K. Wyatt and Aroonrut Wichienkeeo (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1995), p. 66.
66 Van Vliet, *Short history*, pp. 62-3; Hamashita, 'Ayudhya-China relation', p. 62.
67 *RCA (LP)*, p. 15; Vickery, 'Cambodia after Angkor', pp. 491-2.
68 *RCA* (*LP*), p. 16; *CMC*, p. 79.
69 *RCA* (*LP*), pp. 16-17.

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king Borommatrailokanat (Trailok, r. 1448-88) attacked Chiang Mai in 1457/8, 1459/60, and 1461/2 but was forced to withdraw each time.[70] Troops from Sukhothai and Kamphaengphet fought on the Ayutthaya side. Around 1460, Trailok moved his headquarters from Ayutthaya to Phitsanulok, and appears to have remained there for the rest of his reign. In 1474/5, according to the Ayutthaya chronicle, Tilok of Chiang Mai (r. 1441-87) 'asked to establish friendly relations'; the Chiang Mai version of this encounter is hidden behind tales of magic and trickery. The Ayutthaya chronicle records a battle at Chaliang which concludes with Chiang Mai's submission. This battle was subsequently glorified in an epic poem, *Lilit Yuan phai*.[71]

In the fourth stage, Ayutthaya's armies ranged over a broader area. They attacked Nan in 1486/7, fortified Phichai in 1490/1, raided as far as Phrae twice in 1508-11, and attacked Lampang in 1515/6. Some time after Trailok's death in Phitsanulok in 1488, the royal headquarters was relocated back to Ayutthaya. But in the 1520s, a royal son was sent to rule as *upparat* (something like a crown prince) in Phitsanulok, establishing a practice that continued for the next seventy years.[72]

Around this time Ayutthaya's commercial role shifted, as did its military strategy. By the 1490s, private Chinese trade exceeded tribute trade and 'a great efflux of Chinese trading junks' began to arrive in Southeast Asian ports.[73] In 1511 the Portuguese captured Melaka and used their domination of the straits to control the routes running from China through the archipelago to India and Arabia. These efforts pushed Asian traders to find alternative routes, particularly via the gulf and portage over the peninsula. The earlier aftershocks of Mongol expansion in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries may also have shifted trade from land-based routes down to the coast. Ayutthaya became an important entrepot for redistributing Chinese exports to the peninsula, archipelago, and Indian Ocean.

Against this background, the focus of Ayutthaya's aggression changed. After taking Tavoy and Tenasserim between 1460-90, it controlled the portage of the peninsula. In the reign of Ramathibodi II (r. 1491-1529), trade opened up with southern India. From the 1530s, Ayutthaya's military exploits on the upper peninsula brought it into conflict with Pegu.[74] This zone replaced the north as the main area of military conflict over the next century.

Ayutthaya continued to use its maritime access to build its military power. By the 1540s, the army included 'Luzons', Borneans, Cham, Javanese, and Minangkabau. Ferdinand Mendes Pinto, who was a good observer but over-enthusiastic with numbers,

70 *CMC*, pp. 85-90.

71 *RCA* (*LP*), p. 17; *CMC*, pp. 93-7. On the poem, see Lalana Siricharoen, *Khumu lilit Yuan phai* [Guide to the *Yuan phai* poem] (Bangkok: Aksornwithaya, 1975); Cholada Rungraklikhit, *Wannakhadi Ayutthaya ton ton: laksana ruam lae itthiphon* [Early Ayudhya poetry: characteristics and influences] (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 2001), pp. 59-77.

72 *RCA (LP)*, pp. 18-19; *CMC*, pp. 102, 104-5.

73 J. V. Mills, 'Arab and Chinese navigators in Malaysian waters in about A.D. 1500', *JMBRAS*, 47, 2 (1974): 1-82.

74 On these developments see *RCA* (*LP*), p. 18; Vickery, 'Khmer inscriptions of Tenasserim'; van Vliet, *Short history*, pp. 68-9; Sunet Chutintharanon [Sunait Chutintaranond], 'Suk Chiang Kran' [Battle of Chiang Kran], in his *Phama rop Thai: waduai kansongkhram rawang Thai kap Phama* [Burmese fighting Thai: regarding war between the Thai and the Burmese] (Bangkok: Matichon, 1999), pp. 145-69; Victor B. Lieberman, *Burmese administrative cycles: Anarchy and conquest, c. 1580-1760* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 25-32.

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reckoned that 'foreign mercenaries from different nations' numbered 70,000, or one-sixth of the army. Portuguese mercenaries had arrived in Ayutthaya by 1522/3, were used in campaigns against Lanna in the 1530s, and numbered perhaps 60 by 1549.[75] The armies increased steadily in size. In the *Lilit Yuan phai*, Ayutthaya's total forces are given as 30,000. In 1551, 50,000 men plus a naval force were despatched to campaign in Cambodia according to the chronicle. The Portuguese observer de Barros estimated in the 1550s that Ayutthaya could mobilise a million men.[76]

Political geography

Ayutthaya had become a territorial power, but we need to be careful about what exactly that meant. Territorial models of Ayutthaya's growth talk of the city 'absorbing' or 'integrating' outlying areas, and delight in drawing maps with far-flung borders. Certainly Ayutthaya sent armies to fight battles in the hinterland; these seem to have been targeted quite closely at areas which were vital to its trading position – first the northward corridor, and later the portage route over the gulf. Of course, warfare was not totally limited to commercial ends: aggression creates warrior aristocracies which have their own dynamic and momentum. But military might seems to have been used to maintain commercial access and render glory, rather than establishing any firmer forms of control. Accounts of this period – such as the Yuthisathian story of Sukhothai switching its allegiance from Ayutthaya to Lanna in the 1450s, or the *Lilit Yuan phai* epic's narrative of political alignments during the Ayutthaya–Lanna wars – stress the subordination of warrior prince to warrior prince ('loyalty') rather than control over territory, and portray a very fluid political environment in which loyalties were short term.[77] Despite the apparent great triumph over Lanna in the 1470s, neither victor nor vanquished recorded any formalisation of the subordination, let alone any 'integration' of the northern kingdom into Ayutthaya. Ten years after the defeat of Angkor, the Ayutthayan prince governing Angkor was dislodged by a local revolt, possibly – according to Vickery – led by another fugitive adventurer prince from the Ayutthayan court.[78]

The relations between Ayutthaya and the northern cities were especially delicate. In the traditional historiography, these cities were 'absorbed' by Ayutthaya in 1438. However, this assertion is based on a very ambitious reading of an elliptical line in the chronicle: 'In 800 [of the *Chulasakarat* era]…Prince Ramesuan [the future King Trailok], who was his [referring to Borommaracha II, r. 1424-48] young son, went to Phitsanulok. At that time tears of blood were seen to flow from the eyes of the Lord Buddha, the Holy King of Victory [*Phra Chinnarat*]'. As Vickery has remarked, Ramesuan may have been as young as seven, so construing this as a military-diplomatic takeover may be unlikely.[79]

75 Campos, 'Early Portuguese accounts of Thailand', pp. 7, 23; Ferdinand Mendes Pinto, *The travels of Mendes Pinto*, ed. and tr. Rebecca D. Catz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 416.
76 *RCA* (*BM*), p. 29; Campos, 'Early Portuguese accounts of Thailand', p. 13.
77 Cholada, *Wannakhadi Ayutthaya*, p. 76; A. B. Griswold, 'Notes on the art of Siam, No. 6: Prince Yudhisthira', *Artibus Asiae*, 26 (1963): 215-29.
78 Vickery, '2/K.125 Fragment', pp. 56-61.
79 *RCA* (*LP*), p. 15; Vickery, '2/K.125 Fragment', p. 76. The 'absorption' of the northern cities is mentioned in A.B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara, 'A fifteenth-century Siamese historical poem', in *Southeast Asian history and historiography*, ed. C. D. Cowan and O. W. Wolters (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 130.

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Besides, such an interpretation argues that the *Luang Prasoet chronicle* here uses a special metaphorical code which is not obvious elsewhere.

Ayutthaya certainly appears to have become powerful, yet one of the odd features of the chronicular record is that the northern cities never react against Ayutthaya's attacks by sending a force down to batter the city. Could this be simply because we are utterly reliant on chronicles composed in Ayutthaya, probably a century later, and designed to track its own rise? No chronicle has survived from the northern cities, but what is clear is that the ruling families of those cities were far from crushed. Again the lack of local records or *tamnan* is a problem, but the places themselves tell a story. Chaliang/Sawankhalok and Kamphaengphet were large and flourishing centres in the sixteenth century. Kamphaengphet was refortified with high brick walls and ramparts, while Chaliang was ringed with a laterite wall accommodating gun placements. Both cities were embellished with new complexes of temples in the style of a royal capital (these are not precisely dated by inscriptions, but the style indicates the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries). Outside both places spread large areas which are now dotted with the ruins of small *wat* which presumably were community temples, attesting to a large population. Chaliang also had a large ceramics industry which initially manufactured tiles and roof ornaments for temple construction but later expanded into production of crockery for wide export through Asian trade.[80]

The rulers of the northern cities were still kings, and their traditional royal titles were still in use through the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[81] Their capitals retained much of their splendour and attraction. Phitsanulok, which overshadowed Sukhothai because of its strategic location on the north-south route, was the axis of the Chiang Mai/Ayutthaya rivalry and the effective capital (or sub-capital) of Ayutthaya for over a century. Pires recorded that the ruler of Kamphaengphet 'has many fighting men. Inside his own territory he is like the King of this land.' De Barros, who summarised Portuguese knowledge of Siam in the mid-1500s, relayed that the largest cast image in Siam was at Sukhothai and that it was embellished with gold leaf on the upper section and coloured decoration below. Ayutthaya as yet had nothing to rival this in size or splendour.[82] Ramesuan's 1438 visit to Phitsanulok could well have been a pilgrimage. The 'tears of blood' shed by the Phra Chinnarat image were probably a magico-religious event, not a metaphor of defeat.

In the 1550s João de Barros wrote a description of Siam based on reports of the traders, seamen and mercenaries who had spent time there. He presented the core territory as two separate kingdoms. The first, including Ayutthaya and the gulf coast, Barros called 'Muantay', which is clearly *muang Thai* (a name still used to designate present-day Thailand). The second he called 'Chaumua', which seems to be *chao neua*, the 'northern people', equivalent to the northern cities, among which he specifically

80 Thida Saraya, *Muang Sisatchanalai* (Bangkok: Muang Boran, 1994); *Sanghkalok-Sukhothai-Ayutthaya and Asia*, proceedings of a seminar, Bangkok, 22-3 November 2002; Michael Vickery, 'The old city of "Chaliang" – "Sri Satchanalai" – "Sawankhalok": A problem in history and historiography', *JSS*, 78, 2 (1990): 15-29; Don Hein and Mike Barbetti, 'Sisatchanalai and the development of glazed stoneware in Southeast Asia', *Siam Society Newsletter*, 4, 3 (1988): 8-17.

81 Mahathammaracha in Phitsanulok, *Phaya* Chaliang in Chaliang/Sawankhalok, *Phaya* Ramarat in Sukhothai and *Phaya* Saen Soi Thao in Kamphaengphet; Vickery, '2/K.125 Fragment', pp. 73-7.

82 Pires, *Suma oriental*, p. 101; Campos, 'Early Portuguese accounts of Thailand', p. 12; *Thailand and Portugal*, p. 46.

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mentioned Sukhothai and Sawankhalok. He also noted that this second kingdom was 'more correctly speaking' called 'Sião' or Xian/Siam. Some Portuguese maps from this era also show 'Odia' and 'Sian' as separate places, with 'Sian' to the north.[83]

Beyond these two kingdoms de Barros described a periphery of dependencies including the tributary ports on the west of the peninsula (by this time, claims to the Melaka area had been abandoned); the 'Lao' kingdoms of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Lane Xang; and a wild area beyond populated by fierce, horse-riding, tattooed, cannibalistic 'Gueos'. This political geography is roughly congruent with the description in the *Kot monthianban* (Palatine law), with one important exception: the de Barros account distinguishes between two separate 'kingdoms'.[84]

Administrative change

In the late fifteenth century, the administration of Ayutthaya was overhauled. These reforms were very extensive and probably spread over a longer period than the Trailok reign to which they are usually attributed. In brief, they covered these main areas: (1) a territorial reorganisation in which the original coalition of port-cities was probably for the first time brought under a unified administration; (2) introduction or (more likely) tightening of a decimal-based system of forced labour extraction; (3) codification of noble titles and social ranking (*sakdina*); (4) extension of the domain of law through legislation, law codes and expansion of the role of the ruler as law-giver and judge; (5) addition of two senior posts (*nayok*, *kalahom*).

In the past, this revolution in government has been linked to Ayutthaya's conquest of Angkor in 1431 and a supposed absorption of Khmer influences, but there is in fact very little evidence of Khmer vocabulary, concepts and practices.[85] Rather, these reforms indicate three important changes. First, they reflect Ayutthaya's transition from a maritime power to a territorial power. The manpower reforms, additional posts and territorial organisation were designed to enhance the city's military capability. In addition, Trailok 'fortified many principal cities, such as Phitsanulok, Sawankhalok, Kamphaengphet, Sukhothai, etc.' Ramathibodi II (r. 1491-1529) also fortified many places, dredged canals around the capital, 'had the first Treatise on Victorious Warfare compiled, and had the first official registers of each city compiled'.[86]

Second, some aspects of the reforms hint at a synthesis of different systems. The

83 This pattern was copied by several map-makers from a similar original. 'Odia' is shown up a river leading westward from the gulf while 'Sian' is to the north of the gulf close to 'Capelan' (Kamphaengphet?). See, for example, the maps of Mercator (1569) and Ortelius (1570) in Thomas Suárez, *Early mapping of Southeast Asia* (Hong Kong: Periplus, 1999), pp. 141, 166-7.

84 Campos, 'Early Portuguese accounts of Thailand', p. 11. The *Kot monthianban* is discussed in David K. Wyatt, 'The Thai "Palatine law" and Malacca', in his *Studies in Thai history: Collected articles* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1994), p. 84. The separateness of these two may have lingered even longer. Dhiravat na Pombejra has unearthed a rumour that King Prasatthong in 1655 thought of partitioning the kingdom and installing his two major sons at Ayutthaya and Phitsanulok respectively; Dhiravat na Pombejra, *Siamese court life in the seventeenth century as depicted in European sources* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 2001), pp. 207-8.

85 Michael Vickery, 'Review of Robert B. Jones, *Thai titles and ranks including a translation of* Traditions of royal lineage in Siam *by King Chulalongkorn*', *JSS*, 62, 1 (1974): 158-73; and *idem.*, 'The constitution of Ayutthaya: The Three seals code' in *Thai law: Buddhist law. Essays on the legal history of Thailand, Laos and Burma*, ed. Andrew Huxley (Bangkok: White Orchid, 1996), pp. 133-210.

86 Van Vliet, *Short history*, p. 64; *RCA* (*LP*), p. 19.

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senior offices of government were renamed with Sanskritic titles.[87] The system of noble ranking looks like an elaborate attempt to synthesise several prior systems (*yot*, *ratchathinam, tamnaeng*, *sakdina*), though our understanding of just what these terms meant in the fifteenth century is far from clear. Finally, a major element in this synthesis was the transfer of systems and practices visible earlier in the inland states of Lanna and the northern cities such as decimal recruitment systems, emphasis on written law, and grades for the *sakdina* system of ranking.[88] This transfer went beyond administrative reforms: during this period, the Ayutthaya elite also started to display the kind of attention to religious construction and practices which was characteristic of the hinterland centres. Trailok built the royal *wat* of Si Sanphet, while Ramathibodi II 'built and improved many cities, temples, monasteries and houses for the religious and the poor from his own treasury' and also 'established the feasts and the gamedays'. The chronicles note that he had a massive Buddha image cast, honoured images dug up during dredging on the lower Chaophraya and enlarged the Si Sanphet temple. Chairacha (r. 1534-46) is also noted for his religious construction and charitable works, including finally creating a Buddha image larger than that in Sukhothai.[89]

Besides a change in the extent of religious building, there were also modifications in architectural style with more adoption of elements seen earlier in the northern cities. Also in this period, specifically over the 1530s and 1540s, the *Luang Prasoet chronicle* changes markedly in style, moving to a more narrative treatment with emphasis on military exploits. Barros recorded that in Ayutthaya 'the men who are knights and who are involved in warfare…come mostly from the regions where can be found the cities of Sawankhaloke and Sukhothai'.[90]

Geopolitics of dissent

It seems likely that the military alignment in the second half of the fifteenth century resulted in a transfer of people, administrative practices and cultural activity from the northern cities to Ayutthaya. From this point forward, there is a thread running through the chronicles which hints that this synthesis was far from smooth, with incidents of aristocratic dissent with the involvement of northern nobles. Trailok's successor (Intharacha II, r. 1488-91) 'obtained large subsidies… especially from the mandarins, but little from the community. In addition he introduced a practice in which, after the death of the mandarins, one tical of gold had to be paid for every ten measured lands from their estate.' As a result his reign was 'troubled' and his sudden death came 'much to the joy of the mandarins'.[91] In 1524, the chronicles for the first time mention a court purge: 'people dropped anonymous messages. At that time the King [Ramathibodi II] had many of the

87 Vickery, 'Constitution of Ayutthaya', pp. 162-3.

88 Vickery (ibid., pp. 180-1, 195-8) suggests some of these practices might be Chinese in origin, transmitted southwards through the long Tai interaction with the Chinese along the mountain border between China and Southeast Asia.

89 Srisak, *Sayam prathet*, pp. 290 (Trailok) and 301-2 (Chairacha); Ramathibodi II's deeds are mentioned in van Vliet, *Short history*, pp. 68-9, and *RCA* (*LP*), pp. 18-19.

90 *Thailand and Portugal*, p. 49. On architectural change, see Piriya Krairiksh, 'The history of Ayutthaya arts', in *Ayutthaya kap Asiya* [Ayutthaya and Asia], ed. Chanwit [Charnvit] Kasetsiri (Bangkok: Toyota Thailand Foundation and the Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Project, 2001), pp. 144-72.

91 Van Vliet, *Short history*, p. 64.

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nobility killed.' Immediately afterward, the kingdom was inflicted with all kinds of misfortune – too little water in the flood season, an earthquake, inflation – which probably represent the chronicle's code for dissent and disorder. The king appointed his son as *upparat* and sent him 'to rule Phitsanulok',[92] suggesting this might have been one site of dissent.

Three years later, the king died and this son succeeded him as Borommaracha IV (r. 1529-33). The van Vliet chronicle reports that he began 'merciful' but before long 'ruled with a severe hand', and concludes that 'during his lifetime it was generally a troubled and never a fruitful time'. A few years later in 1538, amid more bad omens, King Chairacha learnt that a revolt was being plotted in Kamphaengphet, and had a *Phraya* Narai, presumably the local ruler, executed in that city.[93] The Worawong/Sudachan coup of 1548 also seems connected to northern restiveness. According to the later chronicles (British Museum version, etc.), Sudachan justified the usurpation of the throne on grounds that 'the northern provinces are in turmoil and cannot be trusted in government matters'. After the seizure, orders were sent to remove 'the governors of all seven northern provinces'. This provoked an immediate counter-move, led by a descendant of the Sukhothai family who was holding an official post in Ayutthaya.[94] He was joined by other officials, and by the rulers of Phichai and Chaliang/Sawankhalok; Worawong and Sudachan were ambushed and killed. A royal brother who had fled a year earlier was brought out of the monastery and enthroned as Chakkraphat (r. 1548-69). The leader of the counter-coup was rewarded with his traditional Sukhothai royal title of Thammaracha, marriage to Chakkraphat's daughter and 'the insignia of royalty'. He was also 'given the right to issue royal commands, and given Phitsanulok to rule'. The second member of the group, who may have been from the Kamphaengphet family, was also rewarded with titles, regalia, and a royal daughter. The rulers of Phichai and Chaliang/Sawankhalok were promoted to *Chao Phraya* rank and presented with heaps of golden regalia.[95] Chakkraphat of the Ayutthayan line was king, but Thammaracha and the northern nobles were king-makers.

The finale came twenty years later. The fall of Ayutthaya in 1569 is traditionally portrayed as a conflict between 'Siam' and 'Burma', but in Van Vliet's chronicle it was Thammaracha who engineered the Burmese involvement from 1563/4 onwards. He fled to Pegu after Chakkraphat tried to kill him, and 'began to beseech the King of Pegu to war with Siam'. The King of Pegu was initially reluctant, but Thammaracha provoked him with the story of Chakkraphat's seven white elephants. In Pegu's attack on

92 *RCA (LP)*, p. 19.

93 Van Vliet, *Short history*, pp. 69-70; *RCA* (*LP*), p. 20.

94 *RCA* (*BM*), pp. 22-3; the later chronicles call him *Khun* Phirenthorathep 'of royal lineage' and say that he was 'a descendant of King Ruang… while his mother was a descendant of King Chairacha'; *RCA* (*BM*), pp. 23, 25. In the military hierarchy laws in the Three Seals Code, *Luang* Phirenthorathep is the head of the great right department of the *tamruat*, a military division with unknown duties, with *sakdina* rank of 2,000; see *Kotmai tra sam duang* [Three seals code] (Bangkok: Khurusapha, 1994), vol. 1, p. 286.

95 *RCA* (*BM*), pp. 26-7. The second man appears in the later chronicles as *Khun* Inthorathep, and in the Three seals code (*Kotmai tra sam duang*, vol. 1, p. 287) as *Phra* Inthathep, the head of the Great Left Department of the *tamruat*. *Khun* Inthorathep was given the title *Chao Phraya* Si Thammasokkarat, which seems to have been associated with Kamphaengphet; see the Siva inscription of Kamphaengphet in *Prachum charuk Sayam phak thi 1 charuk krung Sukhothai* [Collected inscriptions of Siam, vol. 1, Sukhothai], ed. Georges Coedès (Bangkok: 1924), pp. 157-9. It is also given as the title of the governor of Sukhothai in the Three Seals Code (*Kotmai tra sam duang*, p. 320).

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Ayutthaya, Thammaracha served as 'field marshal', and Phitsanulok was used as the Pegu army's base. In the (later) Thai chronicles, Thammaracha was aligned with Ayutthaya but mysteriously remained aloof from the conflict. Then in the 1568-9 attack, according to the van Vliet version, Thammaracha again 'advised the Peguan king to resume the war', led part of the Peguan army, and used Phitsanulok as a base. In the Thai chronicles' version, Thammaracha started out aligned to Ayutthaya but then defected to the Burmese side because of a desperately complex intrigue. Both accounts agree that Thammaracha secured Ayutthaya's fall by leveraging dissent among the nobility inside Ayutthaya through his wife's relatives, and winning over the support of some key nobles inside the city who opened the gates to the Burmese and Phitsanulok attackers.[96]

The northern nobles now finally took control. The Peguan king 'invited Prince Thammaracha to ascend the throne of the Capital City of Ayutthaya'. In van Vliet's version, Thammaracha retained a reference to Phitsanulok in his royal title – *Phra Mahathammaracha Phrachao Song Khwae*, where Song Khwae is the old name of Phitsanulok. The title he used four years later in a communication to the Chinese court also may have been *Phrachao Song Khwae*, literally the King of Phitsanulok.[97] Thammaracha appointed other northerners and allies inside the old Ayutthaya nobility to senior positions, and revised all the appointments of provincial governors. Some years later, his son Naresuan (r. 1590-1605) swept people down from the northern cities to populate Ayutthaya and its surrounding region.[98] In 1590, Naresuan returned from Phitsanulok, where he had been ruling as *upparat*, to ascend the throne. Van Vliet's account of his coronation paints him as an outsider importing a more militaristic kingship to Ayutthaya. His palace and procession, as depicted in Jacques de Coutre's eyewitness account in 1595, are strikingly different from Ma Huan's description 170 years earlier. In the procession he wears a gold headpiece studded with jewels, carries two golden crooks, has four large parasols and is surrounded by a large retinue. The palace is made of gilded wood and topped with five *chedi* (spires) covered with gold leaf. Naresuan presides on an elevated throne with two chained tigers at the base.[99]

The old Ayutthayan elite along with its gods and craftsmen had been hauled away to Pegu. The nobles of the northern cities moved in to supplant them. The hinterland came down to the coast.

96 *RCA* (*BM*), pp. 35-8, 71-4; van Vliet, *Short history*, pp. 73 ('beseech'), 76-7 (1568-9); Sunait, *Phama rop Thai*, pp. 16-17. See also Michael Vickery's review of van Vliet in *JSS*, 64, 2 (1976): 221.

97 *RCA (BM)*, p. 74 (Peguan king); van Vliet, *Short history*, p. 77. The Chinese text refers to 'the *yi* [barbarian] envoys sent by Hua-zhao-song…' (Geoffrey Wade, personal communication). Wade confirms that the title could be reconstructed as 'Song'. The mission asked for new seals and tally-slips to replace those destroyed by fire during the Burmese attack. Wade also confirms that the date of the mission was actually 1573, not 1567 as indicated in his '*Ming shi-lu* as a source', p. 268.

98 *RCA* (*BM*), pp. 75-6. The northern nobles continued to be restive and may have attempted to repeat the strategy of allying with Pegu against Ayutthaya; *RCA* (*BM*), pp. 92-4. Naresuan's relocation of people is mentioned in ibid., p. 96. On the impact of this, see Nithi Eoseewong [Nidhi Aeusrivongse], *Kanmuang thai samai Phra Narai* [Thai politics in the time of King Narai] (Bangkok: Matichon, 1994), p. 13.

99 Dirk van der Cruysse, *Siam and the West 1500-1700*, tr. Michael Smithies (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2002), pp. 25-7. Van Vliet (*Short history*, p. 83) quotes Naresuan explaining his cruel use of power with the words: 'This is the way you Siamese must be ruled because you are obstinate people of abominable nature and in a rotten state.'

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Conclusion

In recent years, Ayutthaya has been christened 'the first major capital of the Thai' and the first 'true kingdom of Siam', quietly supplanting Sukhothai in the narrative. The emergence of the Ayutthayan kingdom hence now represents a landmark event in the national story.[100] The dominant interpretations of early Ayutthayan history assume that the city began as a territorial power and grew by internal dynamics – expanding rice cultivation, increasing cultural and administrative complexity, military success – to gradually encompass surrounding territory. These interpretations focus attention wholly on Ayutthaya and banish other cities from the story. In essence they project nineteenth-century Siam – a single territorially ambitious power with a dominant capital – back to the very start of the story.

This essay lays out the evidence that Xian/Ayutthaya in its first two centuries – beginning before the legendary foundation of 1351 – was a maritime power focused on becoming a dominant force in the trading world of the Gulf of Siam and Malay Peninsula in the post-Srivijayan era. This interpretation accords with the first direct records of the city (Ma Huan and Fei Xin) and helps to explain the murky nature of its early history – no inscriptions, few monuments, Chinese involvement, a confusion of founder legends probably assembled later and a shaky dynastic chronology. It also gives a different perspective on the main events of the following two centuries – the northern wars, the Trailok reforms and the sack of 1569.

Unlike most of the island-based coastal states which emerged in the same era, Ayutthaya was backed by a large hinterland. Driven by the commercial logic of controlling the trade routes and supply sources on which its commercial prominence depended, Ayutthaya set out to *become* a territorial power. This project drew Ayutthaya into a complex relationship with the 'northern cities' in its immediate hinterland. Ayutthaya did not quickly dominate and absorb these cities in the early fifteenth century, as sometimes imagined. Rather, Sukhothai remained an important ritual centre, Phitsanulok remained the key strategic centre and for long periods the effective capital, and the northern armies remained critical for neutralising the ambitious state of Lanna. The rulers of the northern cities retained their status, and their capitals became more splendid.

Over time Ayutthaya was increasingly exposed to influences from this northern region. Some people were carried south as prisoners; others probably migrated to a city of such evident wealth and opportunity. In the late fifteenth century, Ayutthaya adopted new administrative systems from the north, and began to pay more attention to religious construction and ritual in the manner of a hinterland state. In the early sixteenth century, northern nobles became king-makers at Ayutthaya. In the 1560s, they allied with the Peguan ruler to dislodge the old elite and dominate the city. This event was the climax of a process extending over almost a century whereby Ayutthaya absorbed people, political structures and cultural practices from the north, and so evolved into the powerful coastal-hinterland hybrid of the high Ayutthaya period.

100 Charnvit, 'Origins of a capital and seaport', p. 78 ('major capital'); Srisakara, *Sayam prathet*, p. 286 ('true kingdom'). Ayutthaya's importance is explicit in the title of Srisakara's *Krung Si Ayutthaya khong rao* [Our Ayutthaya] (Bangkok: Matichon, 1980).

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